

# PRELIMINARY EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

**Taconic High School**  
96 Valentine Road  
Pittsfield, MA 01201

**DRAFT**



## MISSION STATEMENT

*The mission of Taconic High School is to provide a safe learning environment where students are challenged to work to their academic and social potentials in striving to become responsible, global citizens.*

## INTRODUCTION

At the request of the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA), the Pittsfield School District developed this Preliminary Educational Program for the Taconic High School based on the requirements outlined in the MSBA Module 3 – Feasibility Study, Section 3.1.2-Educational Program. This preliminary educational program communicates several critical expectations for the future of Taconic High School, other details related to the delivery of education, and identifies potential impacts on Pittsfield High School. Critical expectations communicated in this preliminary educational program include a commitment to two comprehensive high schools on the two existing sites as a long-term solution, target enrollments for both schools, and descriptions of educational programs to be offered at Taconic High School which will include all the career/vocational technical programs offered in the district. It should be noted that Pittsfield Public Schools expects to add detail to this document during the feasibility study but is committed to the contents provided in this preliminary program.

The information provided is based on current data available, the Education Visioning Master Planning Study completed in May 2008 conducted by Dore & Whittier Architects in collaboration with DeJong Locker Educational Planners, a study titled “Taconic High School Educational Programs Needs Study” conducted by the New England School Development Council (NESDEC) in early 2012, and input provided by the Pittsfield School Committee, Pittsfield Public School administration, and its School Building Needs Commission.

### **General Overview of Existing Taconic High School**

Taconic High School (THS) was constructed in 1969, is approximately 190,000 SF, and sits on 53 acres that includes the building, parking lots and playing fields. The existing building and site serves 853 students in grades 9-12 as of October 1, 2012. Curricular offerings include a full complement of core academic and elective courses as well as a portion of the district’s career/vocational and technical education (CVTE) programs. Data in the NESDEC report suggests that the current student population is composed of

approximately 231 CVTE students excluding those ninth graders enrolled in the exploratory program. NESDEC's report also suggests that 409 students are enrolled in CVTE programs total in the district excluding ninth graders enrolled in the exploratory program. Ninth graders enrolled in the exploratory add 125 students to the CVTE enrollment at Taconic High School and 171 at Pittsfield High School for a grand total of 705 students district-wide, approximately 40 percent of the total enrollment.

## **GRADE AND SCHOOL CONFIGURATION POLICIES**

We are committed to two high schools on the two existing sites for the long-term future. Each high school will serve 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, but will house slightly different program offerings. Each high school will deliver the MASS CORE curriculum and offer opportunities for students to focus on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM). In addition to these offerings, Taconic High School will house all of the district's CVTE programs and offer tuition-in opportunities when available to students from the following districts:

- North Adams
- Mt. Greylock Regional
- Adams-Cheshire
- Central Berkshire Regional
- Lee
- Lenox
- Richmond

Refer to the Career/Vocational and Technical Education Programs section for detailed information. Pittsfield High School will house augmented opportunities in the fine and performing arts. The vision for the future characterizes both high schools as comprehensive high schools – one which houses all the vocational programs and one which houses none.

NESDEC's report suggests that Pittsfield Public Schools can support a CVTE population of approximately 590 in-district students including ninth graders enrolled in the exploratory programs plus an additional 40 non-resident students for a total of approximately 630 students grades 9-12. Based on current data, Taconic also expects to serve approximately 370 non-CVTE students for a total target enrollment for Taconic of approximately 1000 students. As a result, Pittsfield High School expects to house approximately 800 students.

## **CLASS SIZE POLICIES**

Pittsfield School District maintains a target class size of 24 students for academic and elective courses offered at both its high schools. Chapter 74 Guidelines dictate class sizes for CVTE programs.

## **SCHOOL SCHEDULING METHOD**

Taconic High School currently operates on a straight 7-period day with 49-minute class times with no rotation. School begins at 7:20 AM and ends at 2:20 PM. Laboratory periods for science are two class periods and CVTE classes may be up to three periods

long. This schedule creates several challenges for the CVTE classes. Pittsfield Public Schools expects to pursue a week on/week off schedule in the future that better serves CVTE students.

## TEACHING METHODOLOGY AND STRUCTURE

*The mission of Taconic High School is to provide a safe learning environment where students are challenged to work to their academic and social potentials in striving to become responsible, global citizens.*

Taconic High School will offer a full range of academic and elective courses consistent with a comprehensive high school approach including courses in math, English, social studies, foreign language, science, physical education, art, and music. It will also house all of the career/vocational technical programs offered by the district and as many AP courses as feasible.

We expect to continue the current departmentally-based educational structure for the following core academic programs at Taconic High School: English, History/Social Studies, Mathematics, Science, Foreign Language, Physical Education and Human Development. Any building designs, however, should exhibit enough flexibility to accommodate other organizational models in the future.

Additionally, all curricular offerings are organized around four certificate programs. All students shall be enrolled in a specific certificate program. Students who fulfill the general graduation requirements will receive a diploma. Students who complete specific course requirements for a particular certificate program as well as the general graduation requirements will receive, in addition to a diploma, a certificate of completion for the particular program successfully completed.

The expected certificate programs include:

- Arts & Sciences
- Business Technology Sciences
- Technical Education
- Work-Based Learning

### PROGRAM OF STUDIES CHART – Years of Study Required

<b>Department</b>	<b>Arts/Sciences</b>	<b>Voc./Tech.</b>	<b>Business</b>	<b>Work Based Learning</b>
English	4	4	4	4
History/Social Studies	3	3	3	2
Mathematics	3	3	3	3
Science	3	3	3	2
Foreign Language	2	0	0	0
Physical Education	4	4	4	4
Human Development	2	2	2	2

Each certificate program will be composed of one or more career pathways, CVTE programs, and specific course work requirements for each pathway. We are committed to a revised list of CVTE programs on which the career pathways are based, but have not yet revised where these programs will fall in the certificate program organization. Refer to the Career/Vocational and Technical Education section for a list of CVTE programs.

### **Guiding Educational Principles**

Our guiding principles contain the essential constructs for educational delivery and structure, beginning with the following Goals of Education:

- **Academics** - All students are engaged in rigorous instructional activities focusing on both basic skills and higher order thinking;
- **Social Skills** - All students exhibit the appropriate and necessary social skills for global success including written, verbal, and non-verbal communication skills as well as the ability to work in teams;
- **Learning Related to Outside World** - All learning is linked to real world practice in the form of projects, internships, apprenticeships, and/or community service learning;
- **Technical Skills** - All students exhibit both universal technical skills;
- **Creative Skills** - All students are exposed to instruction and content that reinforces the value of creativity and creative thinking.

### **Educational Delivery**

Educational delivery identifies overarching themes required to provide a world-class educational experience supported by the following objectives:

- Student learning is enhanced when students and parents make informed choices regarding areas study to create personalized learning experiences aligned with student interests;
- Since learning has more relevance when it is connected to real-world situations, learning for all students should be connected to the community, region, and world through active learning experiences;
- Community service learning programs and internships provide critical learning and social experiences for all students and greatly increase opportunities for success in both the short and long-term future;
- Applied learning should apply as much to learning in the core learning areas, i.e., English, math, science, and social studies, as it does in the career-technical/vocational programs;
- Integration of core academic content into the career-technical curriculum will be the standard;
- Teaching methods should recognize the multiple intelligences of students, and be differentiated to reach all students;
- Project-based learning should be a basic component of every teacher's delivery, as it allows direct application of learning, and often creates the greatest memories of learning;
- Continue fostering dual enrollments with college level programs;
- Create opportunities for deep, exploratory, personalized learning such as the Senior Capstone Project;
- Increase awareness of high school opportunities and choices among Pittsfield's middle school students;

- Flexible attitudes and programs will enhance the continued search for constant school-improvement;
- Athletics, leadership, and school and community service opportunities are critical aspects of student learning, and should be supported and enhanced through school organization.

## **TEACHER PLANNING AND ROOM ASSIGNMENTS**

All departments will have a collaborative staff room augmented with meeting space and teachers assigned a work space and desk. Classrooms and other instructional spaces will be assigned using scheduling software. The goal is to maximize the number of teachers who teach in the same room consistently; however, any given room may be used by another teacher during a prep or supervisory period. We expect to foster a collaborative culture where teachers do not “own” their classroom, but for convenience, instruct in the same room each day.

## **LUNCH PROGRAMS**

Taconic High School prefers to operate two 30-minute lunch periods that run from approximately 11:00 AM to 12:30 PM. We understand that MSBA space guidelines may favor three lunch periods, but two lunch periods offers additional flexibility in the remainder of the school day. Our kitchen expects to offer a full range of healthy food choices prepared on site each day. There is no expectation to operate a district-wide central kitchen and only provide warming capabilities on site.

## **TECHNOLOGY INSTRUCTION POLICIES AND PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS**

Pittsfield School District believes technology instruction is a critical component of the educational delivery at all school levels and particularly at their high schools. Recently, the District drafted a Technology Plan as an effort to assess and improve their ability to deliver the highest level of technology instruction and support. This plan focused on the following five domains:

- Domain 1: Teaching and Learning
- Domain 2: Data Management
- Domain 3: Network Infrastructure
- Domain 4: Technical Services
- Domain 5: Communication

Instructional activities in the future will require a wide range of technology. We are committed to dual infrastructure (wired and wireless) with a focus on providing 100% wireless coverage, appropriate access to power and data in all instructional spaces, and computing devices for every member of the faculty and administration. We also expect to improve access to portable devices including laptops and tablets as well as interactive white boards. In short, we believe technology should be pervasive and ubiquitous.

## **ART**

As a comprehensive high school, we expect to offer two and three dimensional art courses at Taconic High School. We also expect that Pittsfield High School will house a more extensive range of fine arts.

## **MUSIC/PERFORMING ARTS**

As a comprehensive high school, we expect to offer music and performing arts courses at Taconic High School. We also expect that Pittsfield High School will house a more extensive range of music and performing arts.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Taconic High School will offer a range physical education courses. Students will participate in PE classes twice per week for all four years of their high school career. The range of course offerings requires a variety of spaces including typical classroom spaces, fitness spaces, at least a two-station gymnasium, locker rooms, and outdoor playfields among others. Taconic High School will also house boys and girls athletic programs including basketball and volleyball among others.

## **SPECIAL EDUCATION**

All of the special needs students at Taconic High School will be full inclusion. Although we expect to shift to a week on/week off schedule, special education students will maintain at least one period of resource support. A student will have anywhere between one and five periods of resource each week depending on their needs and schedule. Taconic will also house students with behavior and emotional support needs that require approximately three EOS classrooms.

## **VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

Taconic High School will house all the career/vocational technical education programs in the district. The list of programs to be offered includes:

Chapter 74 Program	Enrollment
Automotive Technology	57
Carpentry	57
Electrical	57
Facilities Management	45
Horticulture/Landscaping	45
Culinary Arts w/ Baking	85
Cosmetology/Barbering	60
Health & Medical Assisting	85
Graphic Communications	TBD
Early Childhood Care	53
Office Technology	57
Manufacturing-Machine Technology	37
Engineering (Project Lead The Way)/Electronics Incorporated	57
Information Support – Networking	57
<b>CVTE Total</b>	<b>752</b>

### **Career/Vocational Technical Education Program Requirements**

The program course requirements for vocational certification shall include all shop and related courses for the particular career/vocational technical education program in which the student is enrolled as well as all regular graduation requirements.

Vocational Education Program Requirements include:

<b>English:</b>	Four full-year courses
<b>Math:</b>	Three years
<b>Science:</b>	Three years, including biology, chemistry and physics (Anatomy and Physiology in lieu of physics for students in the Allied Health Program)
<b>Social Studies:</b>	three years including two years of U.S.History and one year of World History
<b>Physical Ed.:</b>	Four years
<b>Human Develop.:</b>	Two years

### **Diversified Work Experience Program**

Pittsfield High School and Taconic High School expect to continue the Diversified Work experience program. It offers 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders an opportunity to earn credits for off-campus employment. Unlike the Co-op Program for career/vocational technical students, the Diversified Work Experience Program is open to non-technical-vocational students. Students will receive 10-36 credits upon successful completion of the program, dependent on the number of school periods used for the work experience.

### **TRANSPORTATION POLICIES**

High school students who live more than two miles from their high school will be bused. In addition, transportation will be provided in situations determined to be hazardous. Appropriate transportation shall be provided to pupils in special classes. Subject to appropriate authorization, paid transportation may be available for students not meeting the above requirements. Such transportation will be available within the limits of existing seating capacity on established routes. Bus transportation will be limited to public thoroughways. Although we expect to limit the duplication of programs such as AP and foreign language courses, we do not expect to provide transportation between Pittsfield High School and Taconic High School should a student wish to enroll in a course only offered at the other school.

### **FUNCTIONAL AND SPATIAL RELATIONSHIPS AND ADJACENCIES**

In general, we expect all spaces to exhibit the characteristics of best practices with enough embodied flexibility to evolve their function and purpose over time.

When the Visioning Team met in 2007 to shape the high school of the future, several key concepts were emphasized as goals in a new or remodeled school. They included the following key words and descriptors:

**Application:** The school spaces should be organized so that learning can be related to the world outside of school through the immediate and direct application of knowledge. Thus, laboratory, project, common, and workspaces are important to future design. These spaces will support open ended, active and project-based learning experiences in both the short and longer term.

**Flexible:** Spaces are designed to support personalized learning paths for students and may be changed and altered in real time as schedules, programs, and best practices

change. This arrangement enables the staff to use the design of the building to adapt and respond to the needs of each student.

**Relevant, Personalized:** Enabling the development of relationships between students and teachers is critical to support student engagement, goal setting, and college/ career aspirations. Thus, the development of smaller learning communities (professional learning teams) should be included in any future designs.

**Collaborative:** It is important that teachers work together in curriculum development, analyzing student work, sharing best practices, team teaching, and participating in school decisions. Thus, spaces for this collaborative work are critical to any school design. Similarly, it is important that students have an equal opportunity to develop 21<sup>st</sup> century skills of collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creativity – all requiring opportunities for working together, sharing, presenting, and showcasing. Spaces for this work should be included in classrooms, smaller learning communities and in any school common spaces.

**Administration:** The administration, including counseling staff, should be easily accessible and welcoming to students and the public. Administrative teams should be located strategically throughout the school facility to support on-time academic, social, and behavioral supports.

**Basic Needs:** The school building supports environmental conditions in which ventilation, lighting, temperature control, and acoustics are of the very best quality, and natural and green products and technologies are fully incorporated.

We expect to revisit and augment this information during the educational programming portion of the feasibility study.

## **SECURITY AND VISUAL ACCESS REQUIREMENTS**

In the past five years, both Taconic and Pittsfield High Schools have been upgraded with the latest security devices including electronic card access and internal camera monitors. We expect any new or renovated facility to match or exceed these capabilities. In addition, all schools in Pittsfield maintain emergency response plans in concert with FEMA and MEMA – with leadership teams completing online ICS certification.

Systems and personnel training represent only one component of a successful safety and security plan. We expect that the new school will have improved clearly-defined vehicular traffic patterns, entry/egress systems, appropriate lines of sight and passive supervision features incorporated into any design.

## **COMMUNITY ACCESS**

The Pittsfield Public Schools continue to share a very positive partnership with the City of Pittsfield, which owns the school buildings. Therefore, schools are and will continue to be available for community use. Future uses of Taconic High School will include adult training programs, community recreational sports leagues, and community and neighborhood meetings. Any new construction or renovation plans must include provisions for these types of community use. Future designs must also encourage community members to be involved in and volunteer at the schools as content experts,



tutors, mentors, and guides. The District expects to continue to promote learning activities that connect students with the community through internships and service learning projects.